

Using the Conflict Resolution Method: Simple Correction

1. Make sure that you follow the Rules for Fighting Fair yourself.

It's easy to slip into using fouls when you're feeling stressed or challenged. Decide in advance that you won't blow your cool.

2. Ask or remind.

Phrase your first statement as a request, a simple reminder of the rules on the bus, or a question, rather than an order. Try:

*"Do me a favor and stay in your seat, please."
"Don't forget that people have to stay in their seats."
"I see you're not in your seat. Is everything all right?"*

3. Show appreciation.

As soon as the student makes a move towards cooperating, say, "Thanks."

4. Seek more information if the student doesn't cooperate. Repeat the request if necessary.

If the student gets up again, ask if there is a reason he or she can't sit down. Give the direction again, but point out that the problem isn't personal, you are just doing your job, and you would say the same thing to anyone. Try:

"I see you are out of your seat again. Is there a problem I should know about that's keeping you from staying in your seat?"

If yes, ask the student to sit up front and talk to him or her one-to-one at the stop. If no, say, "The rules say that everybody on this bus must stay in his or her seat. No matter who was standing up, I'd have to ask him or her to sit down."

5. Present options.

Suppose the same student stands up the next day. Present him or her with options. Explain that you'd like to work things out, but caution that whatever happens next is up to him or her. Try:

"This is our last chance to talk about this problem before we have to do something. A couple of things could happen now. You could decide to stay in your seat. You could decide to get out of your seat again, but then I'll have to write you a referral. Whatever happens next will be up to you."

6. Reinforce the rule.

If the student gets up again, write him or her a referral.

"You have left me with no choice but to write you up. I'd prefer not to, but I have to enforce the rules for everybody's sake."

Try to give students at least one warning before you write a referral. The difference in Conflict Resolution is that we don't give the warning as a threat ("You'd better do it now, or else!"). We try to find a win/win solution and get the student's cooperation.

"When it comes down to the bottom line, we express our hope that they make the right choice because we want things to work out for them, as well as for ourselves. Let's see how this might work in another situation."

Ask participants to try out the steps with a partner. Tell them that there are two situations they will have to resolve: "Child talking too loudly" and "Child engages in horseplay." Ask one partner to roleplay the first scenario; have the other roleplay the second. It is important that each person gets to try out the technique. The steps should sound something like this:

Example One – Child talking too loudly:

"Cathy, do me a favor and lower your voice a little. Thanks."

"Cathy, your voice is still too loud. Is there something wrong? If so, let me know."

(If Cathy is yelling the next day) "Cathy, this is the last conversation we can have about yelling. A couple of things could happen now. As long as you keep your voice down, you can stay in your seat next to your friends. If you keep yelling, you'll have to move up to the seat next to me for a while. I hope you get to stay next to your friends, but I can't control your voice for you. Whatever happens next is up to you."

(If Cathy chooses to keep yelling) "Cathy, you haven't given me any choice but to write you up. I'm disappointed about having to do this, but I've got to enforce the rules for everybody's sake."

Example Two – "Child engages in horseplay."

"Jim, help me out with something. I know you are just playing, but I see you are pushing Cedric. We could end up with a problem if you keep using your hands on people. Please remember to keep your hands to yourself. If anybody were shoving you, you know I'd have to ask him/her to stop."

(If Jim continues to push Cedric) "Jim, this is the last conversation we can have about horseplay. You can really concentrate on keeping your hands to yourself, and you'll be able to sit in your normal seat with your friends. If you keep pushing, though, you'll have to sit up in this seat next to me for a while. I hope you get to sit next to your friends, but I can't control your hands for you. Whatever happens next is up to you."

(Jim chooses to keep pushing Cedric.) "Jim, come sit in this seat. You'll have a chance next week to sit in your old seat. I have to enforce the rules for everybody's sake."

"The next panel of your handout uses the Rules for Fighting Fair to address a more complicated situation. It is good to use this technique before an incident takes place. It is useful if you want to make a correction, but you also want to help the student find a solution to a real problem he/she is having."

Direct participants to look at the "Using Conflict Resolution Method: More Involved Situations" panel of their handout. Have someone read the panel aloud.